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Christian Aid Week Launched in Britain

(London) - A hut from a European refugee camp has been authentically reconstructed, inside and out, in the forecourt of the Church of St. Martin's-in-the-Fields facing Trafalgar Square, London, during Christian Aid Week, May 12 - 17.

The hut is a central feature in the London part of a drive to encourage the people of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland to help refugees and people in need through the programmes of Inter-Church Aid and Refugee Service of the British Council of Churches and through the World Council of Churches.

The first people to pass through a "frontier post" established in front of the hut were the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Geoffrey Fisher, and the Mayor of Westminster, Sir Charles Norton. On Monday, May 12, they officially opened the exhibition, in spite of a last-minute emergency situation created on the preceding Friday night, when intruders forced a lock and smashed a window of the hut. The contents of the interior were ransacked, apparently in a search for money.

Commenting on the attempted burglary, a British Council of Churches spokesman said the contents of the hut had been thrown around, but that nothing of value had been removed. The burglars had passed over valuable sound-recording equipment. "They found nothing else there of any value," said the BCC officer. "Refugees don't possess anything of value, and our hut is a genuine replica." He added: "We didn't mind the broken window. We had already smashed several ourselves to make the hut more realistic."

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The London bus strike has interfered with plans to place large banners on buses during the Christian Aid Week drive. The Transport and General Workers' Union has been approached and asked to organise a procession of its members in London streets to carry the banners in spite of the bus hold-up.

The London programme is part of a nation-wide observance. About 300 areas in the British Isles will bring the world's need and the churches' work before a wider public. E.P.S., Geneva

Italian Evangelical Pastor Acquitted

(Naples) - The Rev. Pasquale Ferrara, an evangelical pastor, has been acquitted of a charge that he had performed a marriage ceremony without previous police authorisation.

A 1931 law prohibited non-Roman Catholic ceremonies without police approval. However, the civil court at Calabritto, near Naples, based its decision on a ruling last year by Italy's Constitutional Court, which said that constitutional principles on religious equality and freedom of assembly must prevail over conflicting police regulations.

The civil court said this principle was involved in Mr. Ferrara's case and that "the pastor's action was legitimate". E.P.S., Geneva

Golden Rule Crew Get Suspended Sentence

(Honolulu) - The four United States pacifists who attempted to sail a thirty-foot ketch into the Eniwetok nuclear testing grounds have received a sixty-day suspended sentence and been placed on a year's probation.

The men, three Quakers and a Methodist, were arrested by the US Coast Guard at sea off Hawaii (see EPS No. 18) and spent six days in jail. US Federal Judge John Wiig warned them that they would be jailed again if they made further efforts to sail to the testing area. Judge Wiig said that if such disobedience were overlooked, no matter what the motive, "courts would be impotent and judicial power would be a mockery".

Speaking in court, the group's spokesman, former Lt. Comdr. Albert Smith Bigelow, said: "It would have been contempt of God - the highest authority - if I hadn't done my best to stop these nuclear testing atrocities. They are contemptuous crimes against all mankind; a gross evil." E.P.S., Geneva

Jacques Maritain Says Intercredal Charity Needed for Lasting Peace

(Milwaukee, Wisconsin) - A French Roman Catholic philosopher teaching at Princeton University, says that lasting peace in the world can only be brought about by mutual understanding and cooperation of persons "belonging to different spiritual families".

Dr. Jacques Maritain, writing in the May issue of "Spiritual Life", a Roman Catholic quarterly published in Milwaukee, appealed for cooperation between members of different faiths "on the very level of religious life, knowledge and experience".

The philosopher pointed out that he was not asking for tolerance but for "human fellowship" which he went on to describe as "the friendship of charity... between believers of different religious denominations". This fellowship, he said, is associated with the "ecumenical bringing together of divided Christians" and with "the labour of bringing into mutual comprehension believers of every denomination". E.P.S., Geneva

World Baptist Official Reports on Colombia

(Richmond, Virginia) - The time of violent persecution of Protestants in Colombia "seems almost ended", according to Dr. Theodore F. Adams, president of the Baptist World Alliance, who has just returned from a two-week visit there. Dr. Adams says that the new Colombian government "has a more liberal attitude regarding religious freedom", adding that when local police fail to help, Protestants who are persecuted can usually get assistance from the central government.

Dr. Adams, who is also pastor of First Baptist Church in Richmond, Virginia, added that "subtle, non-violent persecution continues in many ways". He said that Protestant children in public schools have to study Roman Catholic doctrine and attend Catholic Masses and processionals. E.P.S., Geneva

Dutch Reformed Pastors Speak on Apartheid Policy

(Capetown) - Two leading ministers of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa have defended the country's racial policy at the annual meeting of the South African Bureau of Racial Affairs.

The Rev. H.J.C. Snijders, moderator of the Dutch Reformed Church in Natal, said that "if the church is of the opinion that the different racial groups can only come to their full development along the road of absolute apartheid, then the church must educate and encourage the public to accept that policy".

Mr. Snijders pointed out that it was "difficult for the church to adopt any other attitude toward South African racial problems than the road of absolute apartheid. It is a fact," he continued, "that the principles of separation are to be found in the Bible. If there were no apartheid, the culture of the white would be completely annihilated by the blacks."

At the same meeting, the Rev. W.A. Landman of Malmesbury, a prominent pastor, said that integration of the two races must be "ruled out", but he added that non-whites "will not be satisfied forever with merely an indirect say in the institutions which decide their interests and future". Dr. Landman said that "we must recognise the fact that immature persons cannot assume full political responsibility, but it also must be recognised that the non-white will not remain in a backward or uncivilised state for ever. We have a long uphill road in front of us." E.P.S., Geneva

Demonstrations in DDR Follow Berlin Synod

(Berlin) - The synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Mecklenburg in the German Democratic Republic (DDR) decided to suspend its sessions last week when Communist demonstrators challenged the church to "make up for the failure" of the all-German synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) (see EPS No. 18) to condemn all use of atomic weapons by German armies.

The decision to end the synod came on the third day of its proceedings following discussions held behind closed doors after the first day. Before the synod opened the demonstrators arrived. They distributed pamphlets and demanded admission to the meetings.

Other demonstrations were staged outside the house of Dr. Fränkel of Görlitz, DDR, who had sharply criticised the manifestations of Communist groups at the Berlin all-German synod.

Church leaders in the province of Silesia have received resolutions from schools, public authorities and government departments in the DDR asking for Fränkel to be punished or to quit East Germany. The Silesian Church's Executive has issued a statement defending Fränkel on the ground that his main concern was for the Berlin synod to be undisturbed in its work.

West German comments on the EKD's meeting include a positive reaction from Hanover's Bishop Hanns Lilje, who writes in the church paper "Sonntagsblatt" that "it is a very important fact that a gathering which was so divided politically nevertheless revealed a unity which did not spring from similar political convictions". Bishop Lilje says "the synod has made a big contribution to public affairs by refusing to regard politics as the only thing in life".

Writing in "Junge Kirche", Dr. Heinz Kloppenburg of Dortmund says "the synod admitted that it could not reach agreement on the burning question of the hour. Merely repeating the general phrases rejecting atomic weapons does not constitute a really concrete message for the Christian who asks what he is to do," continues Dr. Kloppenburg. "However, it must not be overlooked that the synod's request not to arm German military forces with atomic weapons was absolute, unconditional, without 'ifs' or 'buts' or other circumlocutions," he writes.

Expressing a different viewpoint, Bishop Wilhelm Halfmann of Schleswig-Holstein told his church's synod that the Berlin discussions had "weakened the synod and turned it into a political meeting". He declared that the controversy had "brought to light a deep underlying disunity" and that it remained to be seen what the claim to remain united really meant in view of the great differences of opinion on atomic disarmament.

E.P.S., Geneva

Bishop Lajos Ordass Under Criticism in Hungary

(Budapest) - Lutheran Bishop Lajos Ordass, senior vice-president of the Lutheran World Federation and head of the Hungarian Lutheran Church's Southern Diocese, has been subjected to critical comment in his own church.

The Lutheran World Federation in Geneva has expressed concern that the bishop, who was forced last December to resign as primate of the Lutheran Church, might be subjected to further pressure from the Hungarian government as a result of the criticisms.

Successive issues of "Evangelikus Elet", the Lutheran Church paper, have published resolutions of the pastors of Bishop Ordass's diocese in which regret is recorded because "many of the measures adopted by church leaders last year line up alongside the events of the counter-revolution". They call for the bishop "to examine his present attitude and put his relations with the state in order". The pastors' request is made "in order to ensure peace in the diocese".

Some of the pastors are reported to have abstained from voting for the request to the bishop, who was imprisoned on false charges of currency manipulation in 1948, but cleared and rehabilitated by Church and state in the summer of 1956.

E.P.S., Geneva

India's Supreme Court Tests Legality of Education Bill

(New Delhi) - The bill introduced by the Communist government of the South Indian state of Kerala to control state aid to schools run by minority groups is being examined by the Supreme Court of India to determine whether it infringes the national constitution (see EPS No. 36, 1957).

The Counsel for the President of India told the court that enforcement of the bill's conditions would put too much power in the hands of government officers in Kerala and make it possible to control school staffs and determine curricula on the pretext of administering financial grants.

The President's representative, Indian attorney-general M.C. Setalvad, said the bill's clauses threatened minority rights under the Indian Constitution. Mr. G.S. Pathak, appearing for the Kerala Christian Education Committee, said the bill could force minority institutions to provide for the study of Communist and other books that would conflict with the religious faith the schools wished to teach.

Defending the bill on behalf of the Kerala government, Mr. D.N. Pritt said the measure aimed at free and compulsory education for children in primary schools and that this principle should not be discarded "in order to protect certain privileges of the minorities". He argued that the State of Kerala was "anxious to support the right of minorities to have schools of their own choice for their children", but that government aid and recognition could be "granted only on the general terms and conditions applicable to others".

The bill would affect the future of about 2,000 minority-administered schools in Kerala, which is the most highly literate area of India and has the highest proportion of Christians. It has been bitterly opposed by churches. Thirteen groups from Kerala and various other parts of India asked the country's president to raise the question of its legality, including the All-India Anglo-Indian Association, the Apostolic Carmel Education Society, Mangalore, and the Kerala Christian Education Action Committee.

The hearing was expected to last eight or nine days, but the court's judgment will probably not be given until August. E.P.S., Geneva

In Brief

The new high altar of St. Paul's Cathedral in London was consecrated by the Bishop of London on May 7 as a memorial to 335,000 British Commonwealth dead of World Wars I and II. The new altar and canopy are simpler than those destroyed by bombs in 1940, and are believed to be closer to the original design of Christopher Wren.

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Bishop Friedrich Wunderlich of the Methodist Church in Germany has been invited to visit Moscow with a group of Methodist leaders to inform himself about the Church and religion in the Soviet Union.

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Miss Catharina A. De Vlieger has been appointed director of the Press Office of the Dutch Reformed Church. Since 1945 she has been assistant to the late director, Dr. N.G.J. van Schouwenburg, with whom she cooperated in building up the Press Office.

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Following Communist demonstrations outside the meetings of the synod of Mecklenburg, Germany (see Page 3), the Conference of EKD Member Churches in the DDR has declared its opposition to the admission of "delegations" to synod meetings and expressed "consternation" over the events in Mecklenburg.

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The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has issued a discussion outline to guide its pastors and congregations in studying the issue of membership in the Lutheran World Federation. In a letter accompanying the five-page outline, Dr. John W. Behnken, church president, says the "entire question needs thorough study".

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The Rev. Arne Bugge, minister at the Cathedral of Copenhagen, plans to begin a four-and-a-half month visit to Russia in the autumn. He will study medieval liturgical manuscripts and investigate the influence of Byzantine culture on medieval Russia.

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"Neue Zeit", organ of the Communist-sympathising Christian Democratic Union in East Germany, has attacked a Roman Catholic pastoral letter read in German Roman Catholic pulpits as "interference in the internal affairs of the German Democratic Republic". The letter protested against the pressure exerted on people's conscience in the German Democratic Republic (DDR).

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Dr. Edgar H.S. Chandler, director of Service to Refugees for the World Council of Churches in Geneva, has been re-elected to a second term as Chairman of the Conference of Voluntary Agencies Working for Refugees. E.P.S., Geneva